



*The
Museum
of
Costume*

The Museum of Costume Picture Book

Here, in the ideally suitable surroundings of the elegant Assembly Rooms,
is the largest display of costume in the world,
founded on the famous collection of Doris Langley Moore, O.B.E.,
and now greatly enlarged and enriched by donations from many sources.

Assembly Rooms · Bath · Avon · England

The Assembly Rooms



This magnificent building, long described as the finest suite of rooms in Europe, was designed by John Wood, junior, and opened in 1771.

For the next fifty years the Assembly Rooms were the centre of fashion in the West of England, being used for grand functions and society balls. But from 1820 their popularity declined and for more than a hundred years the suite was used for more mundane purposes until after the First World War, when the ballroom was used as a cinema. In October, 1931, the National Trust announced that the Assembly Rooms had been purchased by an anonymous donor (who afterwards was found to be the late Mr. Ernest E. Cook) and given to the Trust for preservation. The National Trust arranged to hand them over to the City of Bath on a peppercorn rent if the City would re-condition them. This was done under the supervision of a successor to John Wood, the late Mr. Mowbray A. Green, and the Rooms were re-opened on 19th October, 1938, by H.R.H. the late Duchess of Kent.

The spirit of the Eighteenth Century was quickly recaptured, and every sort of social function was held in the Assembly Rooms. Unhappily their glory lasted for less than a year, owing to the outbreak of war on 3rd September, 1939. In the early hours of 26th April, 1942, a basket of incendiary bombs burst immediately overhead, and the building was completely burnt out, only the walls remaining standing.

It was some time before the National Trust were able to effect a major restoration. However, in the early 1960's work was commenced with the interior decoration being carried out by Mr. Oliver Messel, who had acted in an honorary capacity because of his regard for the City. The National Trust have once more handed the Assembly Rooms to the City on a renewal of the lease of 1938, and they were re-opened to the public on 23rd May, 1963.



Elizabethan Shirt

A man's white linen shirt embroidered with black thread is one of a few surviving garments from the late 16th century and a fine example of blackwork embroidery. This precise and exquisite work with its interlacing pattern of coiling stems, roses, oak leaves, insects and birds reflects the Elizabethan delight in flowers and the countryside.



1720's Woman's Doublet and Petticoat

This costume of the late 1720's consists of a skirt, which was usually referred to as a 'petticoat' and a sleeveless doublet or waistcoat. The silk brocade of the petticoat was woven in France; the design of pink and blue flowers is set against a cream pattern intended to imitate lace. The feather fan is also of the period.





c.1720 Suit of 3rd
Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick

This suit of brown cloth lavishly embroidered with silver thread, and with lace at neck and wrists, was made for Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick when he was about sixteen. Long hair was fashionable for all men and, although Sir Thomas has his own hair in curled ringlets, an older man would have worn a wig.



1723 Dressing Gown and Cap

The 18th century dressing gown, usually worn with a cap to protect a bald or shaven head when a wig was removed, was a fashionable and comfortable garment for strictly informal wear. In this example the silk damask itself and the shape of the cap reflect the Chinese influence over the decorative arts of the period. The figure is set before a cream linen hanging worked with yellow silk illustrating the character of early 18th century embroidery.





1747 Woman's Dress

Another fine silk damask of the 18th century may be seen in this clear green dress worn with a white embroidered muslin apron, a very fashionable accessory. Round, flat, straw hats were also popular, especially for the country.





Male and female Dress 1770's

During the 1770's women wore their hair powdered and the styles reached towering heights. Dresses were often worn open at the front to reveal a matching petticoat, and the stomacher — a decorative triangular panel — filled in the bodice. This dress of brocaded silk is trimmed with flounces and material ruched and padded to form what were called 'plastic' ornaments. Men's clothes were equally elaborate for evening or formal occasions as is illustrated by this outstanding suit of dark green cut velvet. The rich embroidery, worked in India, is in silver and gold thread with small pieces of mirror glass.



Pulteney Street,
Bath 1850's

Outdoor wear of the mid-19th century is shown in this scene. Capes and cloaks were usually worn with the very full skirts under which went the crinoline, invented in 1856. The most fashionable covering was the shawl with the familiar Paisley pattern (which originated in India). One woman wears delicate white muslin em-



broidered with small red sprigs, and another, in mourning, is dressed entirely in black. Men's trousers at this date were straight and quite narrow, worn with the frock-coat, which could be short and rather wide as in this example of dark green cloth with brass buttons.

Photographed through the Panorama showcase



The Draper's Shop 1860's

A lady dressed in a dark blue costume, or coat and skirt, of woollen cloth faced with black satin is looking at an original sample book of silk ribbons used extensively at this time for every kind of trimming. For those who served in shops, a plain black dress was considered the most suitable wear. The gentleman has a double-breasted frock coat and the fashionable high collar with a coloured silk brocade tie.



The Young Ladies' Bedroom c.1880

By 1870 the crinoline was abandoned in favour of a straighter, narrower skirt with drapery and a small train. The figure with her back towards us is clad in a deep red velvet dress originally worn for her wedding in 1881 by a descendant of the famous actress Sarah Siddons. The little girl in bed has her hair tied in curling rags.



Victoria Park, Bath 1900-1905

White and pastel shades were particularly fashionable at the turn of the century both for women's and children's clothes. These figures illustrate how delicate materials, such as muslin and voile, were pin-tucked and finely embroidered with lace insertions for elaborate afternoon dresses. Sailor suits were very popular for small boys.



The Ante Room Scene 1900-1905

These two early Edwardian ball dresses are fine examples of haute couture of the period when the House of Worth was probably the most famous. The velvet Court dress on the right was made by that designer for Lady Curzon when she was Vicereine of India. Tulle, lace, silks and velvets were fashionable for such gowns, which were lavishly embroidered with silver spangles and small beads, all sewn on by hand.





The 1920's and 1930's

Two dresses and the screen, decorated with covers from 'Vogue', illustrate the 'Art Deco' style of the later 1920's and 1930's when chiffon and crêpe de chine were the most common fabrics.

The rose-printed model of 1928 shows the lengthening hem which followed on after the shorter skirts of the early '20's. By the 1930's dresses fitted closely over the hips to flare out into a longer, fuller skirt, an effect achieved by cutting the fabric on the cross or panelling the skirt, as may be seen in the emerald green chiffon model designed by Lucien Lelong in 1931.





1947 'New Look' Coat by Christian Dior

Christian Dior rose to immediate fame in 1947 with his sensational 'New Look', so called because it threw over all the plain and 'boxy' lines of war-time fashions, and introduced a softer, more feminine shape with long full skirts, tiny waist and sloping shoulders. This black cloth coat is a perfect example and was donated by Dame Margot Fonteyn.



1971

The museum's collection runs up to and includes the fashions of the present day. This 'Hot Pants' outfit in a Liberty cotton, was chosen to represent the Dress of the Year in 1971. The figure in blue jeans, with his long hair and 'Mexican' moustache is typical of young men in the early 1970's.

Photograph taken in the Roman Baths at Bath

ASSEMBLY ROOMS AND MUSEUM OF COSTUME

Open daily (except Christmas Day)

Telephone: Weekdays BATH (0225) 28411

Weekends BATH (0225) 28803

THE COSTUME AND FASHION RESEARCH CENTRE

4, Circus, Bath. Telephone 28411 Ext. 429

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with periodic exhibitions of outstanding items

